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DE RUEHAA #0079/01 0160722

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0081

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3257

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1072

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0943

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1520

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0678

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2121

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000079

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, INR/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2018

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR KDEM TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: PRESIDENT USUALLY NOT IMPRISONING FIRED OFFICIALS

REF: 07 STATE 168833 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Charge Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Little solid information exists about the fates of former ministers and deputy ministers President Berdimuhamedov fired during his first year in office. The one official whose arrest (for corruption) Post was able to confirm -- former Minister of Railroads Orazberdy Hudayberdiyev -- was released in the October 2007 amnesty. Post has not been able to find evidence, in any of the cases, that family members of disgraced high-level officials are being imprisoned or forced into internal exile, as was frequently the case under former President Niyazov. A joint letter of congratulations to President Berdimuhamedov around the new year also seems to indicate that reports from last summer of the arrests of three key advisors -- Viktor Khramov, Aleksandr Zhadan, and Vladimir Umnov -- were false and that the three men remain in their original positions. The mother-in-law of one of the Gurbanmuradov brothers told us that the government is quietly releasing 1-2 prisoners of interest every month. All this seems to suggest that President Berdimuhamedov is less like his predecessor than many opposition websites claim. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Reftel requests follow-up information on a number of individuals either rumored to have been arrested or who President Berdimuhamedov has fired for "grave shortcomings in their work." The following information responds to the tasker, reporting what Post has been able to discover.

¶3. (C) According to reftel, President Berdimuhamedov fired Akmmammed Rakhmanov, Orazberdy Hudayberdiyev, Gurbanguly Aytguliyyev, Yusup Dawudov, Jumadurdy Kakaliyev, Ashirgeldi Zamanov, Orazberdy Khudayberdiyev, and Agadajan Pashiyev. Post has been able to find little follow-up information on any of these officials, except for former Railways Minister Orazberdy Hudayberdiyev (varient transliteration: Khudayberdiyev), who was arrested and convicted of corruption, but pardoned in the October 2007 "Night of Remembrance" amnesty. Post has heard unconfirmed rumors that Agadajan Pashiyev, previously First Deputy Minister of

National Security (MNB) was demoted, but continues to work at the MNB. Neither Post nor OSCE has received any information that family members of disgraced high-level officials have been arrested or sent into internal exile, as was frequently done under former President Niyazov.

¶4. (C) Post has no other solid information on why Rejepov's son was released from prison or why former Minister of Agriculture Payzegeldy Meredov's son was arrested. However, a post FSN, who used to work in the Ministry of Agriculture, reported that Meredov was rumored at the Ministry to have had a family business that operated overseas and suggested that Meredov's son might have been arrested because he was in charge of that business. Post also has no additional information regarding the reasons for Enebay Atayeva's arrest.

¶5. (C) Regarding Viktor Khramov, Aleksandr Zhadan, and Vladimir Umnov, on December 31 "Neutralnyy Turkmenistan" published a congratulatory letter to President Berdimuhamedov from six individuals with first initials and surnames as follows: "Yu. Ishangulyev, V. Khramov, A. Hudayberdiyev, A. Zhadan, Y. Paramov, V. Umnov." This strongly suggests that the rumors of their arrest were wrong and that all are continuing on in their previous positions. In fact, ambassadors in Ashgabat representing FSU countries have recently told Charge all three men are still in place, although one has requested to retire.

¶6. (C) One Embassy FSN reported a recent encounter with the mother-in-law of Yolly Gurbanguradov's brother (a former minister of telecommunications who is also in jail). The mother-in-law at first stated that nothing had changed in

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either case. However, she then said that she remained hopeful, because, she claimed, the government was quietly and without any publicity releasing one or two "political prisoners" every month or so. The government has not announced publicly since October the release of any other prisoners of interest, and Post has no other confirmation that this is happening. Nevertheless, this sort of quiet release policy may be an effort to deal with past mistakes without being forced into a position of having to denounce the former regime.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: As in many closed societies, rumor and speculation run rampant. We caution against putting too much credence in what the rumor mills -- particularly those in the exile opposition press -- are saying. The widespread reports from last spring and summer of Khramov, Zhadan, and Umnov's arrest have been proven false. The intriguing questions remains why the government would not publicize the release of prisoners of concern, when it would gain considerable international approbation for doing so. The government remains hypersensitive about the rotten international reputation it developed under Niyazov, and may simply not want to call attention to the past. Post will continue to try to obtain follow-up information on the fate of former high-level officials who have been fired. Based on the limited information we have to date, however, we believe that we are seeing the beginning of a trend that may signal Berdimuhamedov is trying to avoid the excesses of his predecessor in the treatment of former officials. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND